

BOOK REVIEWS

SELECTED TOPICS IN MEDICAL GENETICS. Edited by C. A. Clarke, M.A., M.D. Sc.D., F.R.C.P. (Pp. x+282; figs. 39. 80s). London, Oxford University Press, 1969.

THE rapid progress and the growing interest in medical genetics during the past decade, has inevitably brought in its train a number of specialist volumes dealing with particular aspects. This volume, the latest in the excellent series of the Oxford Monographs on Medical Genetics, is a collection of papers by the members of the Nuffield Unit of Medical Genetics in Liverpool, each of whom is interested in a clinical aspect of genetics. With so many authors, the standard of presentation is bound to be variable. However, this book is well produced and surprisingly easy to read. The chapters are concise and good use has been made of tables and pedigrees.

The first chapter deals with some of the pitfalls and problems which may arise in genetic studies such as anticipation, phenocopies, consanguinity, family aggregation of diseases not due to genetic factors and the selection of controls. Other sections are devoted to the concepts of polymorphism and of linkage and association. The chapter on pharmacogenetics by D. A. Price Evans is particularly valuable. The variable response to drugs may be determined by the genotype of the patient and the striking side-effects (e.g. succinylcholine sensitivity or anti-coagulant resistance) may indicate the existence of a genetic polymorphic system. Indeed, it is conceivable in future that drug therapy may have to be planned on a much more personal basis than is now the case. D. G. Weatherall and J. B. Clegg who have made many useful contributions to medical genetics, discuss disorders of protein synthesis with special reference to the haemoglobinopathies.

The Nuffield Unit has been concerned with the prevention of haemolytic disease in Rhesus incompatibility and this topic is discussed by J. C. Woodrow. With the increasing measure of success in renal transplantation, transplantation of other organs notably heart, lungs and liver has now begun. R. Harris discusses the methods used to study leucocyte antigens and the evidence that these antigens are concerned with graft survival. Other essays, though less exhaustive, deal with the genetics of schizophrenia, diabetes mellitus, amyloidosis, porphyria, gastrointestinal disease, and chromosome abnormalities in abortion and leukaemia.

Clearly this book has to be read by those interested in medical genetics but all clinicians would benefit by dipping into it, where they would discover that medical genetics is no longer devoted to the study of remote peculiarities but is concerned with medical problems of current interest. It emphasises the fruitful relationship between clinical and genetical research. N.C.N.

OBESITY AND ITS MANAGEMENT. By Denis Craddock. (Pp. ix+191. 35s). Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., 1969.

"SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT (of obesity) when it does occur is the result of a knowledgeable, sympathetic physician having the time and the interest to meet repeatedly with a patient who has at least a modicum of insight into the condition and a considerable motivation to reverse it."

The above quotation is included in Dr. Craddock's book and this is in fact what the book is largely about. Dr. Craddock is a family physician in practice in Croydon and he describes his experiences in the long term management of a group of obese patients in his own practice. In addition he provides background chapters on the theory and management of obesity that are soundly based, in that some of the usual myths with regard to this condition are not perpetuated. Useful addenda of diets, standard weight tables, are included.

Who should read the book? Intelligent patients and other family doctors, yes, as a source of commonsense in the management of obesity. It does, however, fall short as a standard text book on the subject of obesity, except that one should acknowledge that many of the chapters are distinguished by the recent nature of some of the references to scientific research on the subject. J.A.W.